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LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE

I.

FRANCE.

WHEN, some ten years ago, M. de Roberty published in the *Review of Positive Philosophy* a series of articles, under the title of the "New and the Old Philosophy," I was much impressed by the work. The conception of the three types; the idealistic, the materialistic, and the sensualistic, under which nomenclature he ranged the various philosophic systems, seemed to bring order into the history of philosophy. He also proceeded to treat, after the same manner and in a very happy way, the "law of the three states" of Auguste Comte, by this means rectifying and justifying the latter. The law of the three states, wrote M. de Roberty, corresponds with the present state of philosophy, which is again explained by science, so that to whatever measure knowledge may attain to, it will be equalled by philosophy, which borrows its types and its characteristics from the sequence of facts, at the point where it leaves the sphere of explanatory hypotheses.

Since then M. DE ROBERTY has completed by a new study, his first work on this subject. In the "Unknown" he has laid his finger on one of the weak points of modern positivism; perhaps by dint of searching into details, he has shown himself a little too severe on Comte in the book about which I am going to speak to-day, *The Philosophy of the Century* (*La Philosophie du Siècle*).

This book contains a thoughtful criticism of the three doctrines that occupy contemporaneous thought; and which are: criticism,

positivism, and evolutionism. He considers these in conformance to his *criterium*, as simply the varieties of one single species and the absolutely identical manifestation of a common fund of beliefs and hypotheses held generally by all. According to him critical philosophy derives its direct origin from idealism. Positive philosophy, from materialism; and the philosophy of evolution from sensualism. Going further still, he considers critical philosophy as the legitimate outcome of sensualistic idealism; and positive philosophy, similarly, as the product of sensualistic materialism. Sensualism is thus the common ancestor; the three systems inter-penetrating each other. But the promoters of these systems must be judged with equity, put back into their proper places, and ranged according to their epochs. In my opinion, a philosophical doctrine is valuable, not so much by the clear solutions it affords us, as by its methods of procedure, may I say, even by the coloring it gives to thoughtful minds.

I do not hesitate to recognise in Kant, the strong, rough-handed workman of modern philosophy; in Comte, the most utilitarian; in Spencer the subtlest as well as the most successful. Kant possesses the greatest speculative vigor; Comte, the clearest scientific turn of mind; Spencer, the keenest conception of, and insight into, psychological subjects. Taking these philosophers as a whole, Spencer, in spite of his merits, appears to me the least original, the least remarkable of the three. His universal metaphysics has feet of clay. The classification of the sciences that he wished to substitute for that of Comte is obscure, devoid of general utility; in short the influence of Comte on succeeding generations will be more considerable than Spencer's, if indeed there are any philosophers who will be bold enough to avow themselves deliberately as Comtists.

This contradiction should not surprise us. It not seldom happens that the influence of a master continues even when his doctrines have suffered shipwreck. We notice this in the great schools of thought of the present day. We may say with truth, that the critics are inclined to dialectics; the positivists, to methods and systems; the evolutionists to facts. The first excel in the analysis of ideas, but they expose themselves to be lost in abstractions. The

second endeavor to reduce to a system all scientific matter, but they run the risk of being either rigorists or becoming too elementary. The last while making rapid strides in the genesis of the subtler phenomena of life, incur the danger of accepting arbitrary *liaisons*, or of remaining in an inchoate condition. Each one possesses most valuable qualities, which it would be desirable indeed to meet with in the same mind. Each has rendered services which it is but just to recognise and which it would be unwise to disregard.

The main thing is always to be able to understand one another upon the question of what philosophy means and its relation to science. What M. de Roberty cares most for, in all his writings, is the elucidation of this problem. We must concede, that it is one which is worth striving after. And it is surely not asking too much if we demand of every philosopher, that he shall know, more or less, what is meant by philosophising.

Philosophy will be, in the future, very much what it has always been in the past, a general *conception of the world*. This is a fixed fact for M. de Roberty. Is it true that philosophy preceded science, or, that on the contrary it has always been and will continue to be subsidiary to it? Many are, we know, partisans of the first opinion; it has seemed to them that the sciences have separated little by little from the hazy and indistinct conglomerate which bore the name of theology, metaphysics, in a word, of philosophy. M. de Roberty does not hesitate to adopt the contrary opinion. Philosophy, according to him, has always sprung from science, it has always been the equal of science. But though he proclaims this equality as existing between science and philosophy, this does not in the least oblige him to recognise any equality in their manifestations "in history." The knowledge of a given science, implies a certain *conception of the world*; this is the supreme law of philosophical evolution. Philosophy is an abstract science of general interest, having for its end, the integration of the documentary evidence furnished by the various sciences. Comte was strongly imbued with this truth. Spencer made it his own, but he makes a more serious mistake than his predecessor, when he asserts that philosophy is able to "play an active part" in scientific discovery. In the opinion of

M. de Roberty, it is neither the antecedent of science, nor is it even to be called an art. Must it then be called a science? Or is it to be comprehended in science? Neither the one, nor the other. He prefers rather to regard it as a link (“*un trait-d’union*”) between these two different kinds of intellectual activity, science and art. The mental faculties may, he tells us, aim at subjugating nature, either in a direct manner, the result of which will be called science; or in an indirect way, in which case we name it art; or they may have still a third intention, taking a kind of middle course between the utility of *science* and the indirect utility of art, which while actively participating in both, facilitates as well the transition from one to the other, from which springs *philosophy*. “Most unmistakably identical,” says he finally, “are the elements which produce a particular combination, in the one, they are called science, in the other philosophy.”

But we must not confound the two propositions. * “If a house is to be built of brick, does that mean that we are not to distinguish between the materials required in its erection?—that we are to apply to its construction, the ingredients and the procedures used in the making and firing of bricks? We never should build a house if we acted thus.”

Let us not misunderstand this comparison! The house here spoken of is entirely figurative. The hypothesis which underlies it is universally accepted, but its primal condition is always wanting—i. e. universal knowledge. It would be presumptuous indeed, to draw, to-day, the plans and define the style of architecture which shall be used in our future philosophical habitation, since we do not yet possess even the materials wherewith to build it. We can only hope to erect such a temporary shelter, a fort, that may be swept away in a few hours, whenever the enemy shall have discovered an explosive powerful enough to blow it into atoms. I do not care very much, I confess, for the distinction spoken of “between a direct and an indirect utility” and the idea of philosophy forming a link between art and science. This way of representing the facts of the case, seems to me both cumbersome and incomplete. I will not stop here to discuss it. The thoughtful study of M. de Roberty

is not compromised by such a small detail, and I would rather remember the positive teaching which is given in the very striking book that I have just been criticising.

"Philosophy and science," writes the author, "are terms which define two principal *species* of the vast *genus* designated under the one name,—knowledge." The most marked trait of the philosophy of the future, will be the *distinction* between the two species, as *confusion* was the predominant characteristic of the philosophy of the past.

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The work of M. de Roberty gave us a methodic history of philosophy. That of M. F. PICALET, *The Ideologists—An Essay on the Scientific, Philosophic, Religious, etc., ideas and theories in France since 1789*, stretches over a very vast area of descriptive history. His book conducts us from Condorcet to Destutt de Tracy, and Cabanis; from these to Degérando and Laromiguière; it embraces thus nearly the whole of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, which it carries back to the seventeenth, from thence following the thread of its history, through the intervening years, down to our own times. The name "Ideologist" is vague, as are all the rest of the battle-cries which are used by the leaders of parties, or, that their adversaries may make use of against them. Ideology, in the sense used by Destutt de Tracy, signifies, that philosophers must confine themselves to psychological research, more particularly to that which concerns the origin and the formation of ideas, an immense field, embracing philology, ethnology, etc. With regard to the wrong sense which Napoleon attached to this word, it was justified in a certain measure by the pretensions of the philosophers in governing life, politics, and law, by doubtful hypotheses, which did not often accord with practice. It cannot be denied that since the time of Rousseau, we pass much too easily from theory to action, and that we fall back too readily on our imagination, to supplement our actual experience. We find in M. Picavet's book, new and valuable information about all the men who have contributed to the intellectual life of the French nation, during and since the time of the Revolution. We can trace there the origin of certain doctrines,

which have appeared to spring up suddenly before our eyes, and shall often be extremely surprised by what we shall read there. It is a most valuable and important work, showing an enormous amount of erudition, fine critical acumen, and a rare descriptive talent. It is quite voluminous (more than 600 pp. 8vo.), and some might indeed consider that it could have been more condensed. But it is primarily a book of reference, in whose pages we shall surely not complain of finding a large amount of information, when we refer to it.

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With the book of M. BERNARD PÉREZ, *Le Caractère, de l'enfant à l'homme*, (Character, from Childhood to Manhood), we leave the domain of philosophy and history to enter into that of psychology. M. Pérez modestly disclaims all pretension to founding a science of character. Nevertheless, that which he has given us and produced here, bears the stamp of originality in a subject in which authors have hitherto only repeated one another. His work is composed of two parts, of which the second forms the completion of, or rather a commentary on, the first. We find here, to start with, a classification of characters, illustrated by portraits which render the developments more tangible; secondly, a study on the common combinations of the principle traits of personality.

The classification of M. Pérez is founded on movements, that is to say it is displayed in sufficiently complete groups connected with some distinct mode of expression, such as rapidity, slowness, and energy of movements. It offers the practical advantage of substituting for the four or six temperaments of the old schools, which are frequently hard to distinguish, classes more flexible and distinguished by visible gestures which betray, more or less clearly, their physiological foundation. M. Pérez has provisionally established six of these classes. He distinguishes the vivacious, the vivacious-ardent, the ardent, the sluggish, the sluggish-ardent, and lastly the balanced type. The last category is in my judgment a sort of utility-box, apparently designed to receive specimens which we are at a loss where else to put. For one of two things is certainly true,

either this balance is an insignificant trait or it is one that is dominant in the person, and it is absolutely necessary to state which.

Many will undoubtedly question this doctrine that the movements of a person express all his character and that consequently they are competent to reveal it to us. We might maintain, indeed, that if the movements supply us with the labels of each class, it is not always to be distinctly seen how the different traits of character and of intelligence (the author does not separate the two, and gives his reasons for so doing) subordinate themselves to one another and vary with the motor sign chosen to express them. There can be no question, however, that rapidity, energy, or slowness of movement, do not have certain actual and profound connections with our visceral and cerebral functions, and that the motor sign is easy to be made use of, although it does not reach all the facts which it is employed to describe, and although the explanation of these facts still remains to be sought in the physiological substratum.

M. Pérez has secondly attempted a systematisation of character-traits, by successively studying the relations of gaiety and sadness, irascibility and gentleness, courage and fear, kindness and malevolence, self-love and will, with the principal emotional intellectual and volitional traits of character. He has perceived, instinctively as it were, that the pointing out of generic, specific, and individual marks does not possess its entire worth except on the condition that we also point out *the subordination* of the same, and he has given this factor much prominence in the last chapters of his book. This portion of the work is replete with subtle observations, and ingenious and profound reflections, but it is fragmentary in character, a half-way production, I might say, between the disconnected literature of the moralist and a reasoned and methodical description such as ethology ought to furnish later on, after the manner, if possible, of the natural sciences.

The desiderata which I here briefly refer to, are not set forth to diminish the value of the work of M. Pérez. It will in its present form render great services, and I should not be at all surprised if the terminology which he has invented should pass into the language of the day, as it is convenient and easily lends itself to the

description of character-portraits. Even readers who shall find here much to criticise, will not refuse to accord to it real and solid merit.

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After the work of M. Pérez, a study of my own naturally ranges itself—*La Psychologie du peintre**—concerning which I ask permission to offer a few remarks. I have set myself the problem, in this work, of determining a professional type, and I have chosen one of those which are certainly the most distinctly defined. If other authors could give us the psychology of the musician, of the lawyer, of the physician, and of the geometer, such a task would not be an indifferent performance in what concerns our knowledge of *character*, and we should arrive at the construction of a natural history of society from a different point of view and by different methods from those at the disposal of the novelist. We should accomplish, unquestionably, the passage from general and *abstract* psychology, to *concrete* psychology.

Do professional types really exist? and if they exist, what are they composed of? The question as I view it, is not bereft of interest for the psychologist. We do, no doubt, find among painters, vivacious, sluggish, and ardent individuals, and we may indeed, in studying this or that particular painter, discover in him some one or other of the combinations described by M. Pérez. But that does not stand in the way of the growth and constitution of social types, and individuals may find a natural place in the different categories of a general classification without ceasing to belong to their professional category in consequence of a natural self-grouping of their intellectual faculties, and a definite tendency of the traits of their emotional nature. It would be justifiable to say, at the same time simplifying and enlarging a little the facts, that originally our viscera form our character but our cerebral organism forms our profession; and if it is true furthermore that a certain physiological state brings with it a definite intellectual mode of operation, it is none the less true that the same culture of the mind and the long-continued habits of a profession are apt to impose upon one's personality a definite

*All the works so far mentioned are published by F. Alcan.

discipline and mean equilibrium of tendencies and sentiments ; and it is in this sense that it has seemed to me we are at liberty to speak of a professional type without equivocation or violence.

Those who will not accept this manner of looking at this subject will find, I hope, some additional interest in my work on the score of the special questions which are treated of there: the heredity of genius, memory, the classification of the sentiments (implied rather than formulated), the relations of the will to the design considered as writing, the evolution of art in its connection with visual analysis, and so forth. There is here a sufficiently abundant supply of materials capable of being wrought up in social psychology and the criticism of art. But it does not become me to bestow praises on my own work, and it would be too easy for me to subject it to criticism. My readers will find in it themselves the weak portions, without my pointing them out to them ; and it would be a source of great pleasure to me to have the same assurance that they will discover in it qualities which I do not perceive there.

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There remains still to be mentioned *La Première partie d'une étude sur la théorie du droit musulman*,* by SAVVAS PACHA, one time governor and governor general, one time minister of public works and foreign secretary of Turkey. Savvas Pacha—a Christian of Greek descent—has held high positions in the Ottoman Empire and is esteemed as one of the most learned men in Islamic law who have ever lived. His book therefore demands the greatest consideration ; it will not possess less interest for philosophers than for statesmen and jurists. In my opinion, works of this class should be consulted by psychologists as much as by sociologists ; we are too much inclined nowadays to neglect certain social studies which offer us valuable information respecting the genius of races and the conditions of their moral existence.

The work of Savvas Pacha will undoubtedly contribute much toward the elucidation of some mooted points of very first importance ; I should like to mention—the history of creation, and the ex-

*Published by Marchal et Billard, Paris.

position of the principles of a law which rules more than a million human beings and is intimately interwoven with their political life; a more exact knowledge of the Semitic genius; an estimate of the relations which have existed between the juridical metaphysics of the Semitic peoples and that of the schools of Greece, between the Mohammedan law and the Roman law in provinces once Romanised but afterwards subjected to the empire of the Caliphs.

It does not seem at all doubtful that the ontology of Aristotle in particular has exercised an influence on the philosophy of the Arabian jurisconsults. A second truly remarkable fact, too, is not the new ontology which they have produced, but the use they have made of it in their legislative fabrics. It is impossible to enter into details here; I limit myself to the mere pointing out of the facts.

With respect to the originality of the institutions that belong to the period of the first Abbassids, the same has been contested by a number of historians. M. Renan, among others has maintained that they are the work of the Iranian genius. Savvas Pacha refutes this opinion in a peremptory manner, and we shall no longer be able to deny, after having read him, that the Mohammedan civilisation, with the *corpus juris* which stands for its most perfect production, has really proceeded from the genius of the races that bore the banner of Islam from the confines of China to the Straits of Gibraltar.

Shall I add that we may deduce from this work, so learned and so suggestive, the elements of an instructive comparison between two grand divisions of human history whose evolution seems still to be pursued on lines wholly apart—that which we call Christianity and that which has sprung from the teachings of Mohammed?

I fervently hope that Savvas Pacha will not delay the publication of the other works which he has promised. When they appear he will have furnished us with the most considerable work which we possess on the institutions of a great division of humanity, still too little known to us.

LUCIEN ARRÉAT.